

Discussion Questions for *Men We Reaped: A Memoir*

1. How did you feel about the structure of the book—the reverse chronology and the way the author put sections from her life in between the stories of the boys? It’s a lot of movement in time. And a lot of repetition. Did this make the book stronger? Help us understand the author? Or was it merely confusing? (Just trying to be different?) Ward explains her thinking on page 8 of the prologue. Does knowing this help?—*Judy Catterton; Renay Regardie; Gail Comorat*
2. Aside from explaining the structure of the book in the prologue, what purpose does it serve? Beginnings (and endings) are so crucial. Specifically, why begin with visiting their father?—*Gail Comorat; Maribeth Fischer*
3. And speaking of endings, many writers write beyond the ending, meaning they continue longer than necessary. Did Ward do this? Do we need the last chapter with her in New York? Would the book have been better to end with Josh’s death, “...the place where the past and future meet.”? This after all, as Ward tells us on the first page of the second-to-last chapter, “...is the heart.”—*Paul Dyer*
4. Guild member, **Sarah Barnett** wrote: “One review I read commented that the book’s inverted structure, starting with the last of the five deaths in 2004 and ending with her brother’s car crash in 2000 dulls the accumulated impact of each successive loss. I tend to agree.” **Judy Catterton** asks something similar: “Is there a saturation point, a point at which the impact of these deaths is attenuated by the repetition? Isn’t it like becoming desensitized to the horrific images of the war in Ukraine because we’ve seen too many of them?” In other words, was five too many deaths to cover in such depth?—*Sarah Barnett; Judy Catterton*
5. Discuss the setting of DeLisle, Mississippi, originally named “Wolf Town” by its early settlers. What wolf-like wildness persists in DeLisle, even today? How does Ward bring the sights, sounds, smells, and despairs of DeLisle to life? Notice the choice of details in her depiction of all the settings (people’s homes, yards, streets).—*Discussion question supplied by publisher and choice of details focus, Maribeth Fischer*
6. Ward’s choice of details throughout the book (any details, all details) is worth noting: the screaming parrot (pg. 7); the details of the movie *Total Recall* (pg. 220—why those details of the movie?); the description of California (pg. 36—again, notice how she describes this as opposed to Mississippi). As you read, mark any details you think are especially revealing of the larger situation.—*Maribeth Fischer*